

Senator Margarita
Prentice

Winter 2002

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to welcome you to our new 11th District! You may be a recent addition and some of you are back from being redistricted out 10 years ago. And then there are those of you who have remained the vital core of this great 11th District through everything. Before I head back to Olympia, I wanted to provide some insight and updates on some important issues that affect all of us.

When the Legislature convenes Jan. 13, Democrats will no longer be in control of the Senate. It is personally disappointing to lose the majority, but the vision for the kind of state we want Washington to be has not changed.

Our state is at a very real crossroads. Highways continue to see more congestion.

Health-care costs keep rising. Education at our public colleges and universities is harder to afford. Our unemployment rate is among the highest in the country. On top of it all, our budget is about \$2 billion out of whack. And all of this comes at a time when we are dealt conflicting ideas from the public. Just last month, the citizens voted to raise and lower their taxes in the same election!

The decisions made by the Legislature in the next few months will have long-term consequences on our state's economy, schools and communities. My efforts will be focused on education, transportation, and labor and commerce issues. As always, I am committed to a bipartisan effort to help ensure a strong, sure course for our state's future.

I urge you to let me know your concerns and ideas. This information is essential to my accurately representing our community. I hope to hear from you and look forward to a challenging, productive session.

Sincerely,

Margarita Prentice

Margarita Prentice
State Senator, 11th District



How to Contact Me

419 John A. Cherberg Building
P.O. Box 40411

Olympia, WA 98504-0411

Direct Line: (360) 786-7616

Toll-free Legislative Hot Line:

(800) 562-6000 or

(800) 635-9993 (TTY)

E-mail: prentice_ma@leg.wa.gov

On the Web:

www.leg.wa.gov/senate/prentice.htm

Sen. Margarita Prentice, D-Renton, represents the 11th Legislative District, which includes parts of Seattle, Renton, Tukwila, SeaTac, Kent and Burien.

Prescription Drugs

How can we make them more affordable?



Insurance Commissioner
Mike Kreidler

Prescription drugs are an essential part of good medical treatment. Yet because of the rapidly rising costs of pharmaceuticals, many Washingtonians — particularly those without insurance for prescription drugs — are having to dig deeper into their pockets to purchase these often critical medications.

To make prescriptions more affordable, Insurance Commissioner Mike Kreidler will be working with the Legislature this session to develop a prescription drug purchasing partnership that would negotiate lower prices with drug companies. The proposal would:

- save taxpayer dollars;
- improve the quality of care by helping ensure that the right drug gets to the right person; and

- give seniors and others access to discounted drugs.

How would the proposal work?

- It would create a public/private partnership. State agencies, private health plans, employers, unions, individual consumers and others would be allowed to form a voluntary public/private partnership. The partnership would use its collective market clout to negotiate deeper discounts with drug manufacturers.
- It would develop a preferred drug list. An independent panel of medical experts would evaluate which drugs are best at treating particular ailments. This science-based process would lead to the development of a preferred drug list. Such a list would help ensure that people receive the right drug at the right time. It would also give the partnership a tool to leverage lower prices with drug companies.

Apprenticeship Programs

Earn while you learn

Washington currently has one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation because workers with outdated skills and those in overcrowded fields are being laid off. Sadly, our 11th District has been a victim of many of these layoffs.

If you or someone you know is seeking employment or some kind of retraining, the Department of Labor and Industries' apprenticeship program could help. This program combines classroom studies with on-the-job training supervised by a journey-level craft person or trade professional. And apprentices earn money while they learn. The more experienced they become at a trade, the more money they make. Training programs are available in dozens of fields, including automotive, early childhood education, carpentry, plumbing, roofing, culinary arts and fire fighting.

Workers who finish apprenticeships generally earn more money during their careers than those who don't have formal training.

For more information about an apprenticeship, go to www.lni.wa.gov/scs/apprenticeship/default.com on the Internet or call the King County apprenticeship coordinator at (206) 835-1027 or (206) 835-1028.

Gambling

No more expansion of minicasinos

Representatives from the state's minicasinos will be back in Olympia this year seeking support for their proposal, which would allow thousands of electronic slot machines to be installed in bars, card rooms, restaurants and bingo halls. They claim they are losing money and that these machines could provide revenue to the state and local governments. This proposal could be tempting to some lawmakers because of the \$2 billion hole in our state's budget.

As the outgoing chair of the committee that works on gambling issues and as an ex-officio member of the state Gambling Commission, I have held numerous meetings on this issue during the past four years. It is very clear that the public views this type of proposal as an expansion of gambling and no one wants this kind of increased activity in their neighborhoods.

Transportation

Back to the drawing board



The I-405/SR 167 interim flyover ramp should look like this when it's completed in the spring.

Photo illustration provided by the Department of Transportation

Referendum 51 was voted down by the public in November, which means the damage to our economy from traffic congestion will only get worse. The defeat of R-51 sends the message to businesses that we are unconcerned about the jobs that are being driven away from our state because of the transportation mess. This session, I will continue to be involved in drafting a viable plan to get our economy moving again.

Permit streamlining is the good news in transportation. Almost two years ago, the Legislature passed a bill I sponsored that allows the permitting agencies to streamline their process. Not only will selected transportation projects see a quicker permit application turnaround, hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars will be saved in mitigation, redesign costs, etc.

Three pilot projects are currently undergoing this new permit streamlining process: State Route 24 in Yakima, the Hood Canal bridge (SR 3) and our own Interstate 405/SR 167 interchange.

The I-405/SR 167 interim flyover ramp has been under construction since August 2001. It is on schedule and expected to be completed by spring 2003. This project will relieve one of the state's worst accident and congestion sites by separating the "weaving" movements of the current interchange. This "interim" fix will be in place

for a minimum of five years or until the more comprehensive interchange rebuild is funded. The decision was made to move forward with the interim construction because of a lack of funds for the larger project. This approach provides the most immediate traffic relief for our tax dollars.

Language Skills

Let's help all students

Nearly 7 percent of our state's students—about 66,000—participate in some kind of English as a Second Language (ESL) program. That's up from 4 percent 10 years ago. Our district reflects the kind of immigration pattern seen throughout the state. There are students who need additional help and this help should be provided.

This is not an ideological issue. It is simply about serving the needs of our district and allowing flexibility in which techniques are offered—whether they be bilingual or immersion methods.

I hope we can find some common ground on this issue this session in the Education Committee.

Senate Page Program

Learn and have fun



Kathryn Bradshaw
Franklin High School

It is always a pleasure to have students from our local schools serve as Senate pages. They are in Olympia for a week working within the Legislature. A student must be 14 years old but not yet 17 by the time he or she pages. Applications are accepted on a first come first served

basis and are available through my office or online at:
www.leg.wa.gov/senate/sadm/senpage.htm

Just Part of the Job...



Sen. Prentice is interviewed by a local TV news anchor at the end of a committee hearing last session.

Senator Margarita Prentice

WASHINGTON STATE SENATOR
11th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT
419 John A. Cherberg Bldg.
PO Box 40411
Olympia, WA 98504-0411

PRSR STD.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Olympia WA
Permit #133